

Guideline | Possible measures at academic institutions to reduce flight emissions from business trips

Purpose of this guideline

A wide range of measures are available to reduce flight emissions from business travel. This summary aims to support institutions in selecting and testing the measures that are suitable for them.

The guideline distinguishes between measures that can be influenced by the institutions or individuals (internal framework) and measures that can be taken by other actors such as funding organisations, conference organizers or ranking agencies (external framework). The latter can be influenced by joint efforts of the institutions and by networks, while measures related to internal framework conditions are directly the responsibility of the individuals and institutions.

Change of the internal framework conditions

Institution

- Establish a monitoring system to record the institution's flight emissions in the form of:
 - Evaluation and graphical representation of flight emissions (emissions per unit (group, institute, department, faculty), comparison of emissions of different status groups, emissions per travel purpose, total and per full-time equivalent, etc.).
 - Decision about who gets access to emission data, when and how, and what level of transparency is required and possible
- Provide information and tools (factsheets, guidelines, travel decision tool, travel decision tree, best practices, etc.)
- Initiate awareness raising measures, activation of multipliers as well as identifying and supporting role models
- Expansion of videoconferencing (infrastructure, technical support, and training on how to present or exchange information virtually). Here it is worth distinguishing between
 - virtual meetings on a small scale (bilateral, project teams)
 - the organization of virtual workshops and conferences (lasting several days; with up to several hundred participants)
- Introduction of a carbon tax (levy per ton of CO₂) and/or a carbon budget (definition of how much CO₂ can be emitted by air travel)
- Requirements in the travel guidelines for flights (see the FlyingLess Guideline on Travel Policies)
- Adjustment of evaluation and appointment criteria (e.g., research collaborations in the close environment should have as much weight as collaborations with overseas partners)
- Focused networking by taking into account the associated CO₂-emissions

- Consideration of flight emissions in curriculum development (e.g., field trips to areas that can be reached without air travel)
- Review and adaptation of regulations regarding ecological impact
- Quantitative analysis of scenarios (with the help of the monitoring system) to estimate which measures could have a specific reduction effect (e.g., no more business flights)
- Presentation of the topic of reducing emissions from air travel on the institution's website (if possible, with continuously updated figures)
- Formation of think tanks within the institution to discuss difficulties, new ideas and best practice examples
- Institutional anchoring, responsibility, and support on different levels, especially by the leadership

Individual

- Doctoral examinations/speakers/examiners: preferably via video (alternatively: choose European co-examiners)
- Virtual presentations
- Weighing the need for travel, especially for long-haul flights
- Bundling and combining different travel activities
- Choosing direct flights and more efficient airlines
- Choosing (more) local collaboration partners and (more) local conferences (as participants and organizers)
- Biennial (instead of annual) intercontinental conference visits
- Reflect about who (still) has to travel (junior or established scientists)
- Take the train instead of the plane

Change to the external framework conditions

Conference Organizations:

- Hybrid format as the standard
- Multi-hub conferences
- Purely virtual conferences (possibly alternating with presence or hybrid conferences)
- Biennial conferences
- Select easily accessible, centrally located conference venues

Funding bodies: Requirements for project proposals (comparable with existing requirements such as open source, number of publications listed, gender aspects, etc.):

- Estimate greenhouse gas emissions in proposals and final report, at least for trips that have the greatest impact.
- Limitation (based on CO₂ emissions or number of flights) of intercontinental flights

- Limitation of flights in general or introduction of a CO₂ budget
- Number of proposed conference visits should not be considered in the evaluation, possibly limit listing of conference contributions (e.g., top 5)
- Include sustainability aspects in evaluation criteria (especially flight emissions)
- Special contributions for additional costs of train journeys
- Funding of virtual infrastructure possible (also for partner organizations)
- Require that some of the project meetings be accessible by train and/or virtual, hybrid meetings as an alternative
- Equivalence of reputation of virtual and face-to-face presentations

Ranking agencies make greenhouse gas emissions of institutions (including flight emissions) one of the ranking factors

About FlyingLess

With the internationalization of science and research, the air travel of university members has increased – scientists are among the frequent flyers.

The aim of the FlyingLess project is to support universities and research organizations in reducing air travel, which accounts for a significant proportion of their total greenhouse gas emissions.

FlyingLess develops approaches to reduce air travel in the academic sector, which are implemented at different levels (research, teaching and administration).

The project is being conducted in close collaboration with four pilot institutions - the EMBL (European Molecular Biology Laboratory) and the MPI Astronomy in Heidelberg as non-university research institutions, and the Universities of Konstanz and Potsdam as higher education institutions.

Further information can be found on the website www.flyingless.de.

The project is led by the [ifeu insitute](http://ifeu.insitute) Heidelberg in close cooperation with the [Tdlab Geography](http://Tdlab.Geography) at the Institute of Geography of Heidelberg University. Project manager and contact person is Dr. Susann Görlinger (E-Mail: susann.goerlinger@ifeu.de).

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CONTACT

Dr. Susann Görlinger, ifeu - Institut für Energie- und Umweltforschung Heidelberg gGmbH

E-mail: susann.goerlinger@ifeu.de

Website: www.flyingless.de

Twitter: [@FlyingLess_de](https://twitter.com/FlyingLess_de)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/flyingless/>

This compilation is based on the experiences of various universities and is inspired by various documents, including "International measures for academic air travel reduction" (A. Kreil) and "Stay Grounded, keep connected: ETH Zurich flight emissions reduction targets and measures" (S. Görlinger).